

# Starfish

Starfish are animals that fall within the orders of either *Paxillosida*, *Spinulosida*, *Valvatida*, or *Forcipulatida*; and can be identified by their spines and pedicellariae, which they use to migrate from area to area in search of food (Amsler et al., 2013). This study has identified 13 species of starfish that inhabit the North Sea, which include: Common starfish (*Asterias rubens*), Common sunstar (*Crossaster papposus*), and Goose foot starfish (*Anseropoda placenta*) (Laakmann et al., 2016). In the Wadden Sea however, only one species of starfish can be commonly found (Gittenberger et al., 2015). This is the Common starfish that was mentioned earlier (Gittenberger et al., 2015). No invasive species of starfish were identified by this study.



## History/ Population trends

This study was not able to find much information on either the History or Population trends of starfish in the North Sea and Wadden Sea. However, according to Clark and Frid, starfish population are heavily damaged by dredging and beam-trawling (2001). Clark and Frid further denoted that a substantial number of starfish die during stormy weather (2001).

No reliable data was found on the current population size or historic population size of any starfish species in the North Sea or Wadden Sea. It is only known that Starfish are part of the total discards of the North Sea and Wadden Sea, which is between 800.000 and 950.000 tons per year (Stichting Vissenbelangen, 2023).

## Miscellaneous

- The largest starfish in the world, out of the 1600 known species, is the very fragile *brisigid Midgardia xandaros* (Largest starfish, 1999). In 1968, a specimen was collected in the Gulf of Mexico by a Texas AM University research vessel The Alaminos (Largest starfish, 1999). The starfish measured an astonishing 1.38 m (4 ft 6 in) from tip to tip (Largest starfish, 1999).
- Starfish have one of the most unique ways of consuming their food. They consume their prey by holding the food item(s) down and then bring their stomachs outside their bodies (Amsler et al., 2013; Hancock, 1955). The stomach is then placed against the food item(s) and consumed from outside the starfish's body (Amsler et al., 2013; Hancock, 1955).

## Diet

- Bivalves (Amsler et al., 2013; Hancock, 1955).
- Other detritivores (Amsler et al., 2013; Hancock, 1955).
- Detritus (Amsler et al., 2013; Hancock, 1955).

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